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Article



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RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS OF NORTHERN BACTRIA IN KUSHAN PERIOD

Abstract: This article presents the researcher's analysis of the types and characteristics of religious structures in the urban planning of the Kushan period of Bactria. Bactria is historically divided into two parts, which played an important role during the Kushan period: Northern and Southern. Northern Bactria covers the territory of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The religious structures of Northern Bactria in the Kushan period monuments identified so far in these areas have been analyzed on the example of various religious views. Religious structures related to religious beliefs, such as Buddhism or dynastic cult, have been studied separately. However, the religious structures which belong to Kushan period have been analyzed insufficient as a single study. Religious buildings are classified according to which part of the city they are located in and what religion the religious buildings belong to. At the same time, the role of religious buildings in urban planning was revealed.

Key words: Kushan, Northern Bactria, religious structure, urban planning, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, dynastic cult.

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Introduction

From the earliest days of human history, when the building was mastered, the construction of religious buildings began to be observed. Over time, when cities began to be built, religious buildings (pyramids, ziggurats, mausoleums, etc.) were erected in an essential part of the city. Religious buildings are the most valuable source of information about a religious belief in a particular period. Its architectural solution and location in which part of the city provides such information which is about the importance of religious buildings in urban planning and the role of a particular religion in society.

From the preliminary times of the discovery of Kushan monuments in Northern Bactria, religious structures began to be identified. A.S. Strelkov, a member of the expedition of the Museum of Oriental Culture, who conducted research in Old Termez in 1926-1928, identified the Zurmala tower on the outskirts of the city as a Buddhist stupa [1, p. 16]. Later, based on the findings around this building and the fact that it was a square-shaped raw brick used in

its construction, it is noted that this structure belongs to the ancient period. G.A. Pugachenkova's research has confirmed that Zurmala is a Buddhist stupa, but the question remains whether the building was built alone or is part of a complex that has not been determined [1, p.16-18].

Materials and Method

Buddhism is the most widespread religious belief in the Kushan period, which was supported by the central government. According to available written sources, there were many Buddhist temples in these areas. Based on a recent scientific analysis, between 1926 and 1988, there were 28 Buddhist sites in Central Asia, 16 of them were located in Bactria-Tokharistan [1, p.148].

Religious buildings which belong to the Kushan period can be divided into two groups like that: buildings that are located outside the city and inside the city, depending on the location in the city. In addition, depending on which religious belief the religious buildings are intended for: Buddhist

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religious buildings, dynastic cults, and Zoroastrian religious buildings can be divided.

The presence of religious facilities, especially in large cities, demonstrates the city's role as a religious center. For example, among the cities of South Bactria, the religious building which was found from the Dilberjin monument represents the city as a religious center. In contrast, the lack of religious facilities in Jagattepa and Emshitepa is considered by researchers to be a coincidence [2, p.42]. The reason is that the unavailability of religious structures is due to the scale of archeological research. Basically, religious structures are rare in small towns and castles which have the Kushan period cultural layer.

Besides, it had been found that at the Takhti-Sangin monument, the whole city is centered around a religious building. Therefore, the location of religious buildings in the city did not depend on the established rule, but on local tradition and political situation of at that time. In addition, it should be noted that the worship of various Greek deities, which entered the region during the Hellenistic period, was also preserved during the Kushan period. Nonetheless, this is more reflected in architectural decoration, sculpture, and various terracotta sculptures.

M.S.Bolganova, a researcher of the architecture of Buddhist monuments in Central Asia, divided buildings that belong to Buddhist religion into types such as a stupa, temple, monastery, based on the architectural structures of India where the homeland of this religion [1, p.148]. Conversely, in recent years, the researcher T.G.Dorofeeva in her research on the history of religious buildings divided Buddhist religious buildings into the following types: stupa, stone temples, and shrines, and later earthly temples, monasteries, and monastery complexes (vihara)[3, p.88]. This classification can be noted as a typology based on the development of Buddhist structures. This is also important in determining the origin and sequence of construction of Buddhist buildings in the Kushan period.

Among the monuments of Buddhism which is belong to the Kushan period in Northern Bactria, such structures as Qoratepa, Fayoztepa, Zurmala, which were found in the city of Ancient Termez, play an important role. The Qoratepa Buddhist complex which was located in the northwestern part of the Old Termez city and which was the center of Buddhism in the 1st-4th centuries AD has a total area of 8 hectares and is built on three natural hills[4, p.25-31]. Studies have shown that the period of the appearance of the first Buddhist structure on the site of Fayoztepa was the end of the first century BC - the first half of the first century AD [5, p.29-31].

If we look at the religious beliefs of the Kushan period, during this period the population and the ruling class worshiped several religions. There was a "dynastic cult" in the country, which was believed by the ruling class, and this worship was originally

reflected in the iconography of the dynasty rulers in numismatic sources. These were later recorded in dynastic complexes identified as a result of archeological excavations. The first complex of this type was identified in Mata, India. Stone statues of Kushan rulers Vima Tokto, Kanishka, and others were found in this complex. This type of dynastic temple has also been identified at the Surkh-Kotal monument in northern Afghanistan. An important feature of the dynastic temple in Surkh-Kotal is that the statues of the ruler are made of clay [6, 548-563].

In addition, complexes reflecting the dynastic cult were also identified in Northern Bactria, and in the late 50s and early 60s of the last century, the Kholchayon monument was identified and interpreted as the first Kushan palace. The walls of the complex are decorated with clay sculptures, and the architectural structure which was identified at the time is part of a larger complex, and the part which was preserved also suggests that the complex was the basis for a dynastic temple. The walls of the complex are decorated with clay sculptures, and the architectural structure which was identified at the time is part of a larger complex, and the part which was preserved also suggests that the complex was the basis for a dynastic temple. Also, the Uzbek-French expedition found the remains of structures belonging to the dynastic cult in the excavations in the Chingiztepa area. However, due to the fact that the structure is not sufficiently preserved, it is difficult to think about its architecture [6, p.548-563].

Moreover, religious structures belonging to the Zoroastrian religion of the Kushan period dahmas, altar have been identified, dahmas are recorded mainly in the suburbs, and altars are found in various places and even in some settlements. It is noted that G.A. Pugachenkova encountered a dahma while conducting research at the Kholchayon monument. Furthermore, G.A. Pugachenkova, accompanied by architects V.A.Nielsen and A.V.Shukurov, received a topographic history of Dalvarzintepa in the 1960s and encountered the "naus". Studies have shown that the top of the naus was used as a dahma [7, p.242]. Academician of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan E.V.Rtveladze noted that three types of burial structures are mentioned in the Videvdat section of the Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrians, were discovered and studied at the Kampirtepa monument: kata, dahma, and uzdana (naus) [8, p.99-102]. In addition, researchers note nausses which were found from the Yalangtoshtepa and Tepai-Shah monuments, and that corpses were stored in dahmas far from the city, and that the bones were collected after some time [9, p.82]. Researcher K. Toshaliyev, in his research on dahmas which religious structure of Zoroastrianism in Central Asia, based on the above data, noted that similar structures with dahmas have been identified in ancient monuments in northern Bactria, and the origins of these dahmas go back to the Bronze Age.

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Results and Discussion

Firstly, the cities of Northern Bactria which have the cultural layer of the Kushan period, religious buildings belonging to Buddhism, Zardushti, ancestral spirits have been identified so far. Secondly, the most common of these are Buddhist religious sites. Identified Buddhist religious buildings are located outside the city, in the center of city. It is obvious that during the Kushan period, Buddhism played an important role, so a place was built for the construction of religious buildings near the city and in the city center. Thirdly, for the ruling class, there was also a dynastic cult, and such religious structures were

mainly reflected in the central part of the city or in the palace.

Conclusion:

Based on the analysis of some monuments in Bactria, it can be concluded that in the cities of the Kushan period, religious buildings played a special role, and Buddhism was supported by the state in urban planning. In addition, the dynastic cult, which appeared in the Bronze Age, was also found in the magnificent buildings (palaces) in the cities of the Kushan period. However, the absence of religious structures in some monuments of Southern Bactria requires additional archaeological research.

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